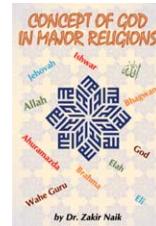
# CONCEPT OF GOD IN MAJOR RELIGIONS

Ishwar
Jehovah
الله
Allah
Bhagwan
Ahuramazda
God
Elah
Brahma
Wahe Guru
Eli

by Dr. Zakir Naik

# INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguishing features of our civilisation is the presence of a large number of religions and ethical systems. Mankind has always sought to understand the reason for creation and his own place in the scheme of things.

Arnold Toynbee studied the history of man through the ages and put his findings in a monumental work consisting of ten volumes. He summarised that in the history of man, religion stood as the centre. In an article in *The Observer* on October 24, 1954 he wrote:

"I have come back a the belief that religion holds the key to the mystery of existence;"

Religion according to the Oxford dictionary means "belief in a superhuman controlling power especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship".

A common feature of all major religions is the belief in a Universal God or Supreme Divine Authority that is Omnipotent and Omniscient. Followers of all major religions believe that the God they worship is the same God for them as well as for others.

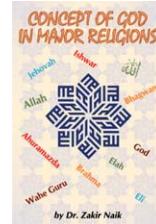
Marxism, Freudianism and other 'non-religious' beliefs tried to attack the roots of organized religion. But these in turn, developed into belief systems themselves. For instance, when communism was many countries of the world it was preached with the same commitment and fervour that characterizes preaching and propogation of (Characterises the act of preaching) religions.

Thus religion is an integral part of human existence.

The Glorious Qur'an says in the following verse:

**"Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; That we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah'. If then they turn back, Say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)".**

***(Al - Qur'an 3:64)***

The study of various religions has been an extremely rewarding experience for me. It has reaffirmed the belief that God created every human soul with some knowledge of His existence. The psycological constitution of man is such that he accepts the existence of the Creator, unles he has been conditioned to believe the contary. In other words, belief in God requires no condition, while a rejection of God does.

# CATEGORISATION OF MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS:

Religions of the world can be broadly categorized into Semitic religions and non-Semitic religions. Non-Semitic religions can be divided into Aryan religions and non-Aryan religions.

**Semitic religions**

Semitic religions are religions that originated among the Semites. According to the Bible, Prophet Noah (pbuh) had a son called Shem. The descendents of Shem are known as Semites. Therefore, Semitic religions are the religions that originated among the Jews, Arabs, Assyrians, Phoenicians, etc. Major Semitic religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All these religions are Prophetic religions that believe in Divine Guidance sent through prophets of God.

**Non-Semitic religions**

The non-Semitic religions are further subdivided into Aryan and non-Aryan religions:

**Aryan Religions**

Aryan religions are the religions that originated among the Aryans, a powerful group of Indo-European speaking people that spread through Iran and Northern India in the first half of the second Millenium BC (2000 to 1500 BC).

The Aryan Religions are further subdivided into *Vedic* and non-Vedic religions. The Vedic Religion is given the misnomer of Hinduism or Brahminism. The non-Vedic Religions are Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. Almost all Aryan religions are non-Prophetic religions.

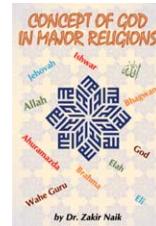
Zoroastrianism is an Aryan, non-Vedic religion, which is not associated with Hinduism. It claims to be a prophetic religion.

**Non-Aryan Religions**

The non-Aryan religions have diverse origins. Confucianism and Taoism are of Chinese origin while Shintoism is of Japanese origin. Many of these non-Aryan religions do not have a concept of God. They are better referred to as ethical systems rather than as religions.

**Most Authentic Definition Of God in any Religion**

The concept of God espoused by a religion cannot be judged by merely observing the practice of its followers. It is quite common for the followers of many religions to be ignorant of the concept of God in their scriptures. It is therefore better to analyse the concept of God in any religion by referring to its holy scriptures.

Let us understand the concept of God in major world religions by analysing what their scriptures have to say about it.

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN HINDUISM

The most popular among the Aryan religions is Hinduism. 'Hindu' is actually a Persian word which stands for the inhabitants of the region beyond the Indus Valley. However in common parlance Hinduism is a blanket term for an assortment of religious beliefs, most of whom are based on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Geeta.

## Common Concept of God in Hinduism :

Hinduism is commonly perceived as a polytheistic religion. Indeed, most Hindus would attest to this, by professing belief in a multitude of Gods.Some Hindus believe in the system of three God while Some Hindus actually believe in the existence of thirty-three crore i.e. 330 million Gods. However learned Hindus who are well versed with their scriptures insist that a Hindu should believe in and worship only one God.

The major difference between the Hindu and the Muslim perception of God is the common Hindus' belief in the philosophy of Pantheism. Pantheism considers everything, living and non-living to be divine and sacred. The Hindus therefore consider the trees, the sun, the moon, the animals and even the human beings as manifestations of God. For the common Hindu, everything is God.

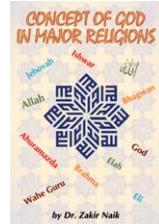
Islam, on the contrary, exhorts man to consider himself and his surroundings as examples of divine creation rather than as divinity itself. Muslims therefore believe that everything is Gods' i.e. God with an apostrophe 's'. In other words we believe that everything belongs to God. The trees, the Sun , the Moon and everthing in this (Universe belong to God.)

Thus the major difference between the Hindu and the Muslim beliefs is difference of the apostrophe 's'. The Hindus says everything is God. The Muslim says everything is Gods', i.e. God with an apostrophe 's'.

The Holy Qur'an says :

***"Come to common terms as between us and you".The first common term is "that we worship none but Allah".***

The first common term is "that we worship none but Allah".

So let us try and find commonality by analysing both Hindu and Islamic scriptures.

## Bhagwad Geeta

The most popular among all the Hindu scriptures is the Bhagwad Geeta. Consider the following verse from the Geeta :

"Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures."

***[Bhagwad Geeta chapter 7 verse 20 (B.G. 7:20)]***

The Geeta is referring to people who are materialistic and therefore worship demigods i.e. besides the True God.

## Upanishads:

The upanishads are also considered sacred scriptures by the Hindus. Consider the following verses from the Upanishads :

**i) "Ekam evaditiyam"**
"He is One only without a second"

***[Chandogya Upanishad 6:2:1]***[1]

ii) Consider again, the following verses from the Upanishads :

**"Na casya kasuj janita na cadhipah."**
"Of Him there are neither parents nor Lord"

***[Svetasavatara Upanishad 6,9] [[2]part II page 263.]***

iii) Consider the following verses from the Upanishads :

**"Na tasya pratima asti"**
(There is no likeness of Him.)

***[Svetasvatara Upanishad chapter 4:19]***

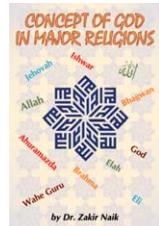
**"Nainam urdhvam na tiryancam na madhye na parijagrabhat na tasy pratime asti yasya nama mahad yasah."**[3]
"There is no likeness of Him whose name is great glory".[3]

[The principal Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan pg 736 & 737]

[Sacred Books of the East, volume 15, the Upanishad part II page no 253]

Compare the above verses with the following verses of the Holy Qur'an

**"And there is none like unto Him."**
***[Holy Qur'an , 112:4]***

**"There is nothing whatever like unto Him."**
***[Holy Qur'an ,42:11]***

iv) The following verses from the Upanishad allude to the inability of Man to imagine God in a particular form :

**"Na samdrse tisthati rupam asya, na caksusa pasyati kas canaiam. Hrda hrdistham manasa ya enam, evam vidur amrtas te bhavanti".**

"His form is not to be seen; no one sees Him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know Him as abiding in the heart become immortal".
***[Svetasvatara Upanishad 4:20]***[4]

The Holy Qur'an refers to this aspect in the following verse:

**"No vision can grasp Him But His grasp is over All vision: He is Above all comprehension,Yet is acquainted with all things".**

***[Holy Qur'an 6:103]***

## The Vedas

Vedas' are considered the most sacred amongst all the Hindu scriptures. There are 4 main vedas. Rig Ved, Yajur Ved, Sam Ved and AtharvaVed.

### 1. Yajur Ved

i) Consider the following verses from the Yajur ved :

**"Na tasya pratima asti"**

"There is no image of Him"[5]
***[Yajurved 32 : 3]***

It further says "as He is unborn, He deserves our worship."

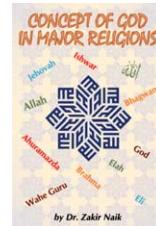
"There is no image of Him whose glory verily is great. He sustains within Himself all luminous objects like the Sun etc. May He not harm me, this is my prayer. As He is unborn, He deserves our worship"

[The Yajurveda by Devi Chand M. A. pg 377]

ii) "He is bodyless and pure." Is mentioned in Yajurved 40 : 8:

He hath attained unto the Bright, Bodiless, Woundless, Sinewless, the pure which evil hath not pierced. Far-sighted, wise, encompassing, he self-existent hath prescribed aims, as propriety demands, unto the Everlasting Years".

***[Yajurved 40 : 8]***

[Yajurveda samhita by Ralph I. H. Griffith pg 538]

iii) It is also mentioned in the Yajur Veda :-

**"Andhatama pravishanti ye asambhuti mupaste"**
"They enter darkness, those who worship natural things", for example air, water, fire etc "They sink deeper in darkness those who worship sambhuti Sambhuti means created things, for example table, chair, idol, etc".

***[Yajurved 40 : 9]***[7]

iv) It also mentions a prayer stating

"Lead us to the good path and remove the sin that makes us stray and wander"

***[Yajurveda chapter 40 :16]***[8]

## 2. Atharva ved

Consider the following verses from Atharva ved :-

### i) "Dev maha osi"

"God is verily great"

***[Atharvaveda 20 58 :3]***

"Verily, Surya, thou art great; truly, aditya, thou art great.As thou art great indeed thy greatness is admire: yea, verily, great art thou,O God".

***(Atharveda Samhiti vol 2 William Dmight Whitney pg 910)***

A similar message is given in Qur'an in Surah Rad :

**"He is the Great, the most High".**

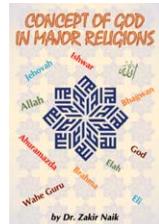
***[The Holy Qur'an 13 :9]***

## 3. Rig Ved

i) The oldest of all the vedas is Rig veda. It is also the one considered most sacred by the Hindus. The Rig Ved states that "Sages (learned Priests) call one God by many names".

***[Rigveda 1:164:46)]***

ii) The Rigveda gives no less than 33 different attributes to Almighty God, Many of these are mentioned in Rigveda Book 2 hymn 1

Amongst the various attributes given in Rigveda, one of the beautiful attributes! Mentioned in Rigveda Subh II verse 3 for Almighty God is 'Brahma'. 'Brahma' means 'The Creator'. Translated into Arabic this word it means 'Khaliq'. Muslims can have no objection if Almighty God is referred to as 'Khaliq' or 'Creator' or 'Brahma'. However Muslims definitely do not subscribe to the view that 'Brahma' is Almighty God who has four heads (nauzubillah), Muslims take strong exceptation to it.

Describing Almighty God in anthropomorphic terms also goes against the following verse of Yajurveda :

**"Na tasya Pratima asti'**

(There is no image of Him)

***[Yajur Ved 32 : 3]***

Another beautiful attribute mentioned in the Rigveda Book II hymn 1 verse 3 (R.V. 2:1:3) is Vishnu. 'Vishnu' means 'The Sustainer'. Translated into Arabic it means 'Rabb'. Again, Muslims can have no objection if Almighty God is referred to as 'Rabb' or 'Sustainer' or 'Vishnu'. But the popular image of Vishnu among Hindus is that of a God who has four arms, with one of the right arms holding the 'Chakra' ie a discus and one of the left arms holding a 'conch shell', riding a bird or reclining on a snake couch. Muslims can never accept any image of God. As mentioned earlier this also goes against Yajurveda chatper 40 verse 19.

iii) Consider the following verses from the Rigved:

**"Ma chidanyadvi shansata"**
"O friends, do not worship anybody but Him, the Divine One.
***[Rigveda Book 8 :1:1]***[10]

[Rigveda samhiti vol ix, pg 1 and 2 by swami Satyaprakash Sarasvati and satyakam Vidhya Lankar]

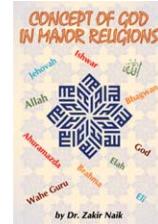
iv) "The wise yogis concentrate their minds; and concentrate their thought as well in the Supreme Reality, which is Omnipresent, Great and Omniscient. He alone, knowing their functions, assigns to the sense organs their respective tasks. Verily, great is the glory of to Divine Creator".
***[Rigveda 5:81]*** [11]

[Rigveda Samhiti volume 6 page 1802 and 1803 by Swami SatyaPrakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidhyalanka]

## Brahma Sutra of Hindu Vedanta:

The Brahma Sutra of Hindu Vedanta is:

**"Ekam Brahm, dvitiya naste neh na naste kinchan"**
"There is only one God, not the second; not at all, not at all, not in the least bit".

Thus only a dispassionate study of the Hindu scriptures can help one understand the concept of God in Hinduism.

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN SIKHISM:

Sikhism is a non-semitic, Aryan, non Vedic religion. Though not a major religion of the world, it is a branch or offshoot of Hinduism founded by Guru Nanak at the end of the 15th Century. It originated in the Area of Pakistan and North West India called Punjab meaning the land of the 5 rivers. Guru Nanak was born in a Kshatriya (warrior caste) Hindu family but was very strongly influenced by Islam and Muslims.

## DEFINITION OF SIKH AND SIKHISM

The word 'Sikh' is derived from the word 'Sisya' meaning disciple or follower. Sikhism is a religion of 10 Gurus, the first Guru being Guru Nanak and the 10th and the last being Guru Gobind Singh. The sacred book of Sikhism is Sri Guru Granth also called Adi Granth Sahib.

## THE FIVE – 'K'S

Every Sikh is supposed to keep the five 'K's which are also serve as his identity.

(i) Kesh – uncut hair; which all the Gurus kept

(ii) Kangha – comb; used to keep the hair clean.

(iii) Kada – metal or steel bangle; for strength and selfrestrain

(iv) Kirpan – dagger; for self defence

(v) Kaccha – special knee length underwear or underdrawler for agility

## MULMANTRA :- THE FUNDAMENTAL CREED OF SIKHISM

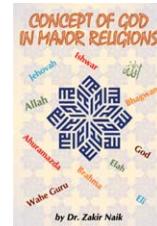
The best definition that any Sikh can give regarding concept of God in Sikhism is quote the "Mul Mantra" – the fundamental creed of Sikhism, which occurs at the beginning of Guru Granth Sahib.

It is mentioned in Sri Guru Granth Sahib volume 1 Japuji, the first verse

"There exists but one God, who is called the true the creator, free from fear and hate, immortal not begotten, self -existant, Great and compassionate".

Sikhism enjoins on its followers strict monothiesm. It believes in only One Supreme God who is, in the unmanifest form called 'ek omkara'.

In the manifest form He is called as Omkara and has several attributes such as :

Kartar – The Creator
Sahib – The Lord
Akal – The Eternal
Sattanama – The Holy name
Parvardigar – The Cherisher
Rahim – The Merciful
Karim – The Benevolent
He is also called 'Wahe Guru' – the One true God.

Besides Sikhism being strictly monotheistic, it does not believe in Avataravada – the doctrine of incarnation. Almighty God does not incarnate Himself in what is known as Avatara. Sikhism is also strongly against idol worship

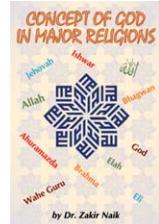
### Guru Nanak influenced by Kabir

Guru Nanak was influenced by the sayings of Sant Kabir so much that several chapters of Shri Guru Nanak Sahib contain couplets of Sant Kabir.

One of the famous couplets of Sant Kabir is

**"Dukh mein Sumirana sabh karein Sukh mein karein na koya Jo sukh mein sumirana karein To dukh kaye hoye"**

(Everyone remembers God during trouble but no one remembers Him during peace and happiness. The one who remembers God during peace and happiness why should he have trouble ?).
Compare this with the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

**"When some trouble toucheth man, He crieth unto his Lord, Turning to Him in repentance: But when He bestoweth A favour upon him As from Himself, (man) Doth forget what he cried And prayed for before, And he doth set upRivals unto Allah"**
***[Holy Qur'an 39:8]***

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN ZOROASTRIANISM:

Zoroastrianism is an ancient Aryan religion which originated in Persia more than 2500 years ago. Though it has relatively few adherents, less than one hundred and thirty thousand in the whole world, it is one of the oldest religions. The Iranian Prophet Zoroaster was the founder of Zoroastrianism (also commonly known as Parsiism). The sacred scripture of the Parsis is the Dasatir and Avesta.

God in Zoroastrian religion is known as 'Ahura Mazda' 'Ahura' means 'the Lord' and 'Mazda' means 'the Wise' hence 'Ahura Mazda' means 'the Wise Lord' or 'the Wise God'. Ahura Mazda stands for a strict form of Monotheistic God.

## Qualities of God according to Dasatir :

According to Dasatir, Ahura Mazda has the following qualities :

(i) He is One.

(ii) Nothing resembles Him.

(iii) He is without an origin or end.

(iv) He has no father or mother, wife or son.

(v) Without a body or form.

(vi) Neither the eye can behold Him, nor the power of thinking can conceive him.

(vii) He is above all that you can imagine of.

(viii) He is nearer to you than your own self.

## Qualities of God according to Avesta

According to Avesta, the Gathas and the Yasna give the various characteristics to Ahura Mazda such as

### (i) Creator

***(Yasna 31:7 & 11) (Yasna 44:7) (Yasna 50:11) (Yasna 51:7)***

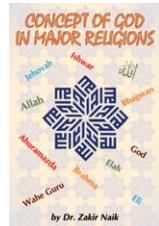
### (ii) Most Mighty – the Greatest

***(Yasna33:11) (Yasna 45:6)***

### (iii) Beneficent –'Hudai'.

***(Yasna 33:11) (Yasna 48:3)***

### (iv) Bountiful – 'Spenta';

***(Yasna 43:4,5,7,9,11,13,15) (Yasna 44:2) (Yasna 45:5) (Yasn 46:9) (Yasna 48:3)***

## CONCEPT OF GOD IN JUDAISM:

Judaism is one of the major Semitic religions. Its followers are known as Jews and they believe in the prophetic mission of Prophet Moses (pbuh).

(i) The following verse from Deuteronomy contains an exhortation from Moses (pbuh)

**"Shama Israelu Adonai Ila Hayno Adna Ikhad"**
It is a Hebrew quotation which means

**"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord"**
***[The Bible, Deut 6:4]***

(ii) Consider the following verses from the Book of Isaiah :

**"I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour."**
***[The Bible, Isaiah 43:11]***

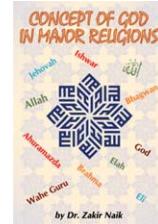
**(iii)"I am lord, and there is none else**
**There is no God besides me."**
***[The Bible, Isaiah 45 : 5]***

**(iv)"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."**
***[ The Bible, Isaiah 46:9]***

(v) Judaism condemns idol worship in the following verses :

**"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor see them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..."**
***[The Bible, Exodus 20:3-5]***

(iv) A similar message is repeated in the book of Deutoronomy :

**"Thou shalt have none other gods before me.Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is inheaven above, or that in the earth beneath, or that is in the water beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..."**
***[The Bible, Deut 5:7-9]***

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN CHRISTIANITY:

Christianity is a Semitic religion, which claims to have nearly two billion adherents all over the world. Christianity owes it name to Jesus Christ (peace be on him). Jesus (pbuh) is also a revered figure in Islam.Islam is the only non-Christian Faith that prescribes faith in Jesus (pbuh):

Before we discuss the concept of God in Christianity let us examine the position of Jesus (pbuh) in Islam:

(i) Islam is the only non-Christian faith, which makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus (pbuh). No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus (pbuh).

(ii) We believe that he was one of the mightiest Messengers of Allah (SWT).

(iii) We believe that he was born miraculously without any male intervention, which many modern day Christians do not believe.

(iv) We believe that He gave life to the dead with God's permission.

(v) We believe that He healed those born blind, and the lepers with God's permission.

One may ask, if both Muslims and Christians love and respect Jesus (pbuh), where exactly is the parting of ways? The major difference between Islam and Christianity is the Christians' insistence on the supposed divinity of Christ. A study of the Christian scriptures reveals that Jesus (pbuh) never claimed divinity. In fact there is not a single unequivocal statement in the entire Bible where Jesus (pbuh) himself says, "I am God" or where he says, "worship me". In fact the Bible contains statements attributed to Jesus (pbuh) in which he preached quite the contrary. Consider the following statements in the Bible, attributed to Jesus Christ (pbuh):

**"My Father is Greater than I"**

***(John 14:28)***

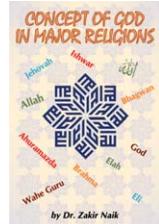
**"My Father is Greater than all"**

***(John 10:29)***

**"...I cast out devils by the spirit of God...."**

***(Mathew 12:28)***

**".... with the finger of God cast out devils....."**

***(Luke 11:20)***

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me."

**The mission of Jesus Christ (pbuh) – he came to fulfill the Law:**

Jesus (pbuh) never claimed divinity for himself. He clearly announced the nature of his mission. Jesus (pbuh) was sent by God to confirm the previous Judaic law. This is clearly evident in the following statements attributed to Jesus (pbuh) in the Gospel of Mathew:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

***(The Bible, Mathew 5: 17-20)***

**God sent Jesus (pbuh):**

The Bible mentions the prophetic nature of Jesus' mission in the following verses:

**"... and the word whic h ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which has sent me.**

***(The Bible, John 14:24)***

**"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."**

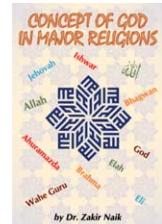
***(The Bible,John 17:3)***

Jesus refuted even a remote suggestion of his divinity. Consider the following incident mentioned in the Bible:

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

And he said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

The above statements from the Bible refute the Christian dogma of divinity of Jesus and of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus (pubh). Jesus (pbuh) exhorts keeping the commandments as the means to achieve salvation.

***( The Bible, Mathew 5: 17-20)***

## Jesus (pbuh) of Nazareth – a man approved of God:

The following statement from the Bible supports the Islamic belief that Jesus (pbuh) was a prophet of God.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, A man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

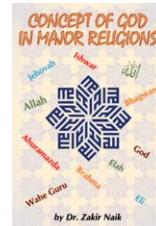
## The First Commandment is that God is One:

The Bible does not support the Christian belief in trinity at all. One of the scribes once asked Jesus (pbuh) as to which was the first commandment of all, to which Jesus (pbuh) merely repeated what Moses (pbuh) had said, namely:

**"Shama Israelu Adonai Ila Hayno Adna Ikhat".**

This is a Hebrew quotation, which means:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."

***(Mark 12:29)***

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN ISLAM:

Islam is a Semitic religion, which has more than 1.2 billion adherents all over the world. Islam means "submission to the will of Allah". Muslims accept the Qur'an, as the word of God revealed to Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). Islam states that Allah sent messengers and prophets throughout the ages with the message of the Unity of God, and accountability in the Hereafter. Islam thus makes it an article of faith to believe in the earlier prophets, starting with Adam, and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, John, Jesus and many others (may peace be on them all).

## The Most Concise Definition of God:

The most concise definition of God in Islam is given in four verses of Surah Ikhlas which is Chapter 112 of the Holy Qur'an:

1. **"Say: He is Allah, The one and Only.**
2. **"Allah, the Eternal, Absolute.**
3. **"He begets not, nor is He begotten.**
4. **"And there is none like unto Him."**

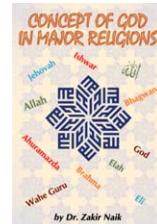
***[Holy Qur'an 112:1-4]***

The word 'Assamad' is difficult to translate. It means 'absolute existence', which can be attributed only to Allah, all other existence being temporal or conditional. It also means that Allah is not dependent on any person or thing but all persons and things are dependent on Him.

## *Surah Ikhlas* - the touchstone of theology:

Surah Ikhlas (Chapter 112) of the Holy Qur'an, is the touchstone of theology. 'Theo' in Greek means God and logy means study. Thus Theology means study of God and to Muslims this four lines definition of Almighty God serves as the touchstone of the study of God. Any candidate to divinity must be subject to this 'acid test'. Since the attributes of Allah given in this chapter are unique, false gods and pretenders to divinity can be easily dismissed using these verses.

## What does Islam say about 'god-men'?

India is often called the land of 'god-men'. This is due to the abundance of so called spiritual masters in India. Many of these 'babas' and 'saints' have a large following in many countries. Islam abhors deification of any human being.

To understand the Islamic stand towards such pretenders to divinity let us analyze one such 'god-man', Osho Rajneesh. Rajneesh was one among the multitude of 'spiritual teachers' produced by India. In May 1981 he went to U.S.A. and established a town called 'Rajneeshpuram'. He later fell foul of the West and was finally arrested and asked to leave the country. He came back to India and started a commune in Pune which is now known as the 'Osho' commune. He died in 1990. The followers of Osho Rajneesh believe that he is Almighty God. A visitor to the 'Osho commune' in Pune will find the following epitaph on his tombstone:

"Osho – never, born never died; only visited the planet earth between 11th December 1931 to 19th January 1990".

They forget to mention that he was not given visa for 21 different countries of the world. The followers of Rajneesh see no problem in their 'god' visiting the earth and requiring a visa to enter a country!

Let us put this candidate to divinity, Bhagwan Rajneesh, to the test of Surah Ikhlas, the touchstone of theology:

i) The first criterion is "Say, He is Allah, one and only". Is Rajneesh one and only? No! There are many people like Rajneesh who claim divinity. Some disciples of Rajneesh may still hold that Rajneesh is one and only.

ii) The second criterion is, 'Allah is absolute and eternal'. Rajneesh was surely not absolute and eternal since he died in 1990. We know from his biography that he was suffering from diabetes, Asthma, and chronic backache. He alleged that the U.S.A. Government gave him slow poison in Jail. Imagine Almighty God being poisoned! Rajneesh was neither absolute nor eternal.

iii) The third criterion is 'He begets not, nor is He begotten'. We know that Rajneesh was born in Jabalpur in India and had a mother as well as a father who later became his disciples.

In May 1981 he went to U.S.A. and establised a town called 'Rajneeshpuram'. He later fell foul of the West and was finally arrested and asked to leave the country. He came back to India and started a commune in Pune which is now known as the 'Osho' commune. He died in 1990. the followers of Osho Rajneesh believe that he is Almighty God. A visitor to the 'Osho commune' in Pune will find the following epitah on his tombstone:"Osho – never, born never died; only visited the planet earth between 11th December 1931 to 19th january 1990".

They forget to mention that he was not granted visa for 21 countries of the world. Can aperson imagine a 'God' visiting the earth and requiring a visa to enter a country! The Arcbishop of Greece said that if Rajneesh had not been deported, they would have burnt his house and those of his discipiles.

The fourth test, which is the most stringent, is “There is none like unto Him”. The moment you can imagine ‘God’ or compare ‘God’ to anything then he (the candidate to divinity) is not God. It is not possible to conjure up a mental picture of the One True God. We know that Rajneesh was a human being with a white flowing beard. He had 2 eyes 2 ears, 1 nose, 1 mouthPhotographs and posters of Rajneesh are available in plenty. The moment you can imagine what god is, he is not God.

Many are tempted to make anthropomorphic comparisons who was given the title of Mr. Universe, the strongest man in the worl. What is the concluding remark to this section of "acid test"? This said testcannot be passed by anyone except the true God.

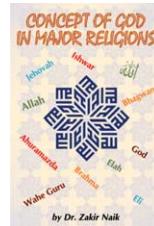
## By what name do we call God?

The Muslims prefer calling Allah, instead of the English word ‘God’. The Arabic word, *‘Allah’*, is pure and unique, unlike the English word ‘God’, which can be played around with.

If you add ‘s’ to the word God, it becomes ‘Gods’, that is the plural of God. Allah is one and singular, there is no plural of Allah. If you add ‘dess’ to the word God, it becomes ‘Goddess’ that is a female God. There is nothing like male Allah or female Allah. Allah has no gender. If you pre-fix tin before the word God, it becomes tin-God i.e., fake God. Allah is a unique word, which does not conjure up any mental picture nor can it be played around with. Therefore the Muslims prefer saying 'Allah', but sometimes while speaking to the non-Muslims we may have to use the inappropriate word God for Allah. Since the intended audience of this book is general in nature, consisting of both Muslims as well as non-Muslims, I have used the word God instead of Allah in several places in this article.

## God does not becomes a human being:

Some people argue that God can do everything, then why cannot He take human form? If God wishes He can become a human being. But then He no longer remains God because the qualities of God and human beings in many respects are completely incompatible. The following paragraphs will show the absurdity of the idea of God becoming a human being.

God is immortal and human beings are mortal. You cannot have a God-man i.e. an immortal being, and at the same time and in the same entity. It is meaningless. God does not have a beginning while human beings have a beginning. You cannot have a person, not having a

beginning and at the same time having a beginning. Human being have an end   You cannot have a being, which has no end and an end at the same time.  It is meaningless.

God Almighty does not require to eat whereas human beings require nourishment to sustain life.

**"And He it is that Feeds but is not fed."**
***[Holy Qur'an 6 :14]***

God does not require rest or sleep while human beings cannot go indefinitely without rest.

**But He – the Living, The Self-subsisting, Eternal. 296 No slumber can seize Him Nor sleep.  His are all things In the heavens and on earth."**
***[Holy Qur'an 2:255]***

## Worship of another human is useless:

If the idea of God becoming a human is unacceptable, we must also agree that there is therefore no sense in worshipping another human. If God becomes a human form, He ceases to be God and possesses all the qualities of a human. For example if a brilliant professor meets with an accident and suffers irreparable loss of memory, it would be foolish on the part of his students to continue to take lessons from him in that subject.

Moreover if God takes human form, the same human cannot later become God, since human beings, by definition, do not possess the power to become God. The worship of God in a human form is therefore a logical fallacy and should be abhorred in all its forms.

That is the reason why the Holy Qur'an speaks against all forms of anthropomorphism.The glorious Qur'an says in the following verse:

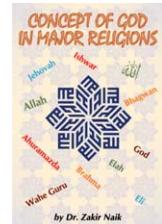
**"There is nothing whatever like create him"**
***(Al-Qur'an 42:11)***

## God does not perform ungodly acts:

The attributes of Almighty God preclude any evil since God is the fountainhead of justice, mercy and truth. God can never be thought of as doing an ungodly act. Hence we cannot imagine God telling a lie, being unjust, making a mistake, forgetting things, and such other human failings.Similarly God can do injustice if he wants but He will never do it because being unjust is an ungodly act.

The Holy Qur'an says:

**"Allah is never unjust  In the least degree"**
***([Holy Qur'an 4:40)***

God can be unjust if he wants, but the moment God does injustice He ceases to be God.

## God does not forget nor does He make mistakes:

God will not forget anything because forgetting is an ungodly act, which reeks of human limitations and failing. Similarly God will not make a mistake, because making mistakes is an ungodly act.

**"...... my Lord never errs, nor forgets".**

***[Holy Qur'an (20:52)]***

## God performs Godly acts:

He has power over all things: The Islamic concept of God is that God has power over all things. The Holy Qur'an says in several places:

"For verily Allah has power over all things"

***[Holy Qur'an (2:106)]***

***[Holy Qur'an (2:109)]***

***[Holy Qur'an (2:284)]***

***[Holy Qur'an (3:29)]***

***[Holy Qur'an (16:77)]***

***[Holy Qur'an (35:1)]***

Futher the Glorious Qur'an says:

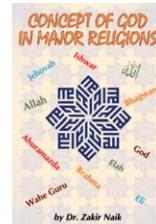
**"Allah is the doer of all He intends"**

***[Holy Qur'an (85:16)]***

We must keep in mind that Allah intends only Godly acts and not ungodly acts.

Many religions at some point believe,directly or indirectly in the philosophy of anthropomorphism i.e. God becoming a human form. Their contention is that Almighty God is so pure and holy that He is unaware of the hardships, shortcomings and feelings of human beings. In order to set the rules for human beings He came down to earth in the form of a human. This deceptive logic has fooled countless millions through the ages. Let us now analyze this argument and see if it stands to reason.

## The Creator prepares the instruction manual:

Allah (SWT) has endowed us humans with reason and intelligence. We invent and manufacture appliances for specific purposes. Tape recorders for instance are manufactured in large numbers. It has never been suggested that in order to understand what is good for the tape recorder the manufacturer should become a tape recorder himself. One simply assumes that the manufacturer will publish an instruction manual, since he has complete knowledge of his product. In short the instruction manual gives the dos and don'ts for the machine.

If you think of the human being as a machine,it is indeed a complex creation of Allah (SWT).Our Lord and Creator Allah (SWT) need not come in the form of a human being to know what is good or bad for the human being. He only has to reveal the instruction manual to mankind.The Holy Qur'an is the instruction manual for human beings.

Moreover, Allah will call this creation to account on the Day of Judgement. It therefore stands to reason, that the Creator informs us about the dos and don'ts of life.

## Allah chooses Messengers:

Allah (SWT) need not come down personally for writing the instruction manual. Over the ages Allah has chosen men in every nation to deliver the Divine message. Such chosen men are called as messengers and prophets of God.

## Some people are 'blind' and 'deaf':

Despite the absurdity of the philosophy of anthropomorphism, followers of many religions believe in and preach it to others. Is it not an insult to human intelligence and to the Creator who gave us this intelligence? Such people are truly 'deaf' and 'blind' despite the faculty of hearing and sight given to them by Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

**"Deaf, dumb, and blind, They will not return (to the path)."**

***[Holy Qur'an 2:18]***

The Bible gives a similar message in the Gospel of Mathew:

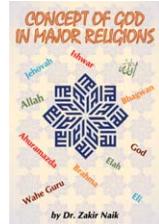
**"Seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."**

***[Matthew 13:13]***

A similar message is also given in the Hindu Scriptures in the Rigveda

**"There maybe someone who sees the words and yet indeed do not see them; may be another one who hears these words but indeed does not hear them"**

***[Rigveda 10:71:4]***

All these Scriptures are telling its reader that though the things are made so clear yet they divert away from the truth.

# Attributes of God:

**To Allah belong the most beautiful names:**

The Holy Qur'an says:

**"Say: Call upon Allah, or Call upon Rahman: By whatever name you call Upon Him, (it is well):For to Him belong The Most Beautiful Names."**

***[Holy Qur'an 17:110]***

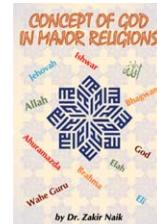
A similar message regarding the beautiful names of Allah is repeated in the Holy Qur'an in:

***Surah Al-Aaraf (7:180), in Surah Taha (20:8) and in Surah Al-Hashr (59:23-24)***

The Qur'an gives no less than 99 different attributes to Almighty God and the crowning one is Allah. The Qur'an refers to Allah as Ar-Rahman (Most Gracious), Ar-Raheem (Most Merciful) and Al-Hakeem (All Wise) among many other names. You can call Allah by any name but that name should be beautiful and should not conjure up a mental picture.

# Each attribute of God is unique and possessed by Him alone:

Not only does God possess unique attributes, but also each attribute of Almighty God is sufficient to identify Him. I shall clarify this point in detail. Suppose we take the example of a famous personality, say astronaut Neil Armstrong.

If someone says Neil Armstrong is an American  The attribute of being American possessed by Neil Armstrong is correct but not sufficient to identify him. Similarly Neil Armstrong is an astronaut. The attribute of being an astronaut is not unique to Neil Armstrong  . To identify the person uniquely we must look for a unique attribute. For example, Neil Armstrong was the first human to set foot on the moon. So when one asks, who was the first man to set foot on the moon, the answer is only one, i.e. Neil Armstrong. Similarly the attribute of Almighty God should be unique e.g. Creator of the Universe. If I say creator of the building, it may be possible and true but it is not unique. Thousands of people can make a building, so there would be no difference between man and God. But each attribute of Allah points to none but Allah.

For example:

**"Ar-Raheem", the Most Merciful**

**"Ar-Rahman", the Most Gracious**

**"Al-Hakeem", the Most Wise**

So when one asks, who is "Ar-Raheem", the Most Merciful, there can be only one answer, i.e. Almighty Allah.

### One attribute of God should not contradict with other attributes:

To continue with the earlier example, if somebody says Neil Armstrong is an American astronaut who is only four feet tall, the attribute (American astronaut) is correct but its associated quality (only four feet tall) is false. Similarly if someone says that God is the Creator of the Universe with one head, two hands, two feet, etc. the attribute (Creator of the Universe) is correct but the associated quality (in the form of human being) is wrong and false.

### All attributes should point to the one and same God:

Since there is only one God all the attributes should point to one and the same God. To say that Neil Armstrong was an American astronaut who first set foot on the moon, but his the second was Edwin Aldrin is wrong.Both have Unique Qualities Similarly to say that the Creator is one God and the Cherisher is another God is absurd because there is only one God with all these attributes combined together.

## Unity of God:

Some polytheists argue by saying that the existence of more than one God is not illogical. Let us point out to them that if there were more than one God, they would dispute with one another, each God trying to fulfill his will against the will of the other Gods. This can be seen in the mythology of the polytheistic and pantheistic religions. If a 'God' is defeated or unable to defeat the others, he is surely not the one true God. Also popular among polytheistic religions is the idea of many Gods, each having different responsibilities. Each one would be responsible for a part of man's existence e.g. a Sun god, a Rain god, etc. This indicates that one 'God' is incompetent of certain acts and moreover he is also ignorant of the other Gods' duties and responsibilities. There cannot be an ignorant and incapable God. If there were more than one God it would surely lead to confusion, disorder, chaos and destruction in the Universe. But the universe is in complete harmony.

The Holy Qur'an says:

**"If there were, in the heavens And the earth, other gods Besides Allah, there would Have been confusion in both! But glory to Allah, The Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above What they attribute to Him!"**

***[Holy Qur'an 21:22]***

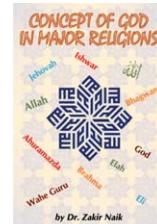
If there were more than one God, they would have taken away what they created. The Holy Qur'an says:

**"No son did Allah beget, Nor is there any god Along with Him: (if there were Many gods), behold, each god Would have taken away What he had created, And some would have Lorded it over others! Glory to Allah! (He is free) From the (sort of) things They attribute to Him!"**

***[Holy Qur'an (23:91)]***

Thus the existence of one True, Supreme Almighty God, is the only logical concept of God.

There are a few religions like Buddhism and Confucianism, which are agnostic religions. They do not comment on God. They neither confirm nor deny the existence of God. There are other religions like Jainism, which are atheistic religions and which do not believe in the existence of God.

(Inshallah I shall be publishing a book "Is the Qur'an God's Word?" which can Alhamdulillah prove the existence of Allah (SWT) to an atheist or an agnostic by means of reason, logic and science on the basis of the Holy Qur'an.)

## ALL RELIGIONS ULTIMATELY BELIEVE IN MONOTHIESM:

All major religions that believe in the existence of God ultimately, on a higher level, believe in one supreme God. All religious scriptures actually speak about monotheism i.e. belief in only one true God.

### People change scriptures for their benefit:

By the passage of time most of the religious scriptures have been distorted and changed by people for their own benefits. The creed of many religions has thus been distorted from monotheism to pantheism or polytheism. The Holy Qur'an says:

**"Then woe to those who write The Book with their own hands, And then say: "This is from Allah," To traffic with it For a miserable price! Woe to them for what their hands Do write, and for the gain They make thereby."**

***[Holy Qur'an 2:79]***

## TAWHEED:

### Definition and Categories:

Islam believes in 'Tawheed' which is not merely monotheism i.e. belief in one unique God, but much more. Tawheed literally means "unification" i.e. "asserting oneness" and is derived from the Arabic verb 'Wahhada' which means to unite, unify or consolidate.

Tawheed can be divided into 3 categories.

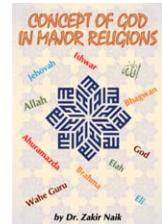
(i) Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah

(ii) Tawheed al-Asmaa-was-sifaat

(iii) Tawheed al-Ibaadah.

### a. Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (maintaining the unity of Lordship)

The first category is 'Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah'. 'Ruboobeeyah' is derived from the root verb "Rabb" meaning Lord, Sustainer and Cherisher.

Therefore 'Tawheed-ar-Ruboobeeyah' means maintaining the unity of Lordship. This category is based on the fundamental concept that Allah alone caused all things to exist when there was nothing. He created or originated all that exists out of nothing. He alone is the sole Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer of the complete universe and all between it, without any need from it or for it.

**b. Tawheed al-Asmaa was-sifaat (maintaining the unity of Allah's name and attributes):**

The second category is 'Tawheed al Asmaa was Sifaat' which means maintaining the unity of Allah's name and attributes. This category is divided into five aspects:

(i) Allah should be referred to as described by Him and His Prophet:

Allah must be referred to according to the manner in which He and His prophet have described Him without explaining His names and attributes by giving them meanings other than their obvious meanings.

(ii) Allah must be referred to as He has referred to Himself

Allah must be referred to without giving Him any new names or attributes. For example Allah may not be given the name al-Ghaadib (the Angry One), despite the fact that He has said that He gets angry, because neither Allah nor His messenger have used this name.

(iii)Allah is referred to without giving Him the attributes of His creation,

In a reference to God, we should strictly abstain from giving Him the attributes of those He has created. For instance in the Bible, God is portrayed as repenting for his bad thoughts in the same way as humans do when they realize their errors. This is completely against the principle of Tawheed. God does not repent and He does not commit any mistakes or errors.

The key principle when dealing with Allah's attributes is given in the Holy Qur'an in Surah Ash-Shurah:

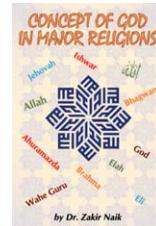
**"There is nothing Whatever like unto Him, And He is the One That hears and sees (all things)."**

Although hearing and seeing are human qualities, when attributed to the Divine Being they are without comparison in their perfection, unlike when associated with humans who require ears, eyes, etc. and who are limited in their sight and hearing.

(iv) Men should not to be given any attribute of God:

To refer to a human with the attribute of God is also against the principle of Tawheed. For example, referring to a person as one who has no beginning or end (eternal).

(v) Allah's name cannot be given to his creatures: Some divine names in the indefinite form, like 'Raoof' or 'Raheem' are permissible names for men as Allah has used them for Prophets; but 'Ar-Raoof' (the Most Pious) and Ar-Raheem (the most Merciful) can only be used if prefixed by 'Abd' meaning "slave of" or "servant of". i.e. 'Abdur-Raoof' or 'Abdur-Raheem'.

***[Holy Qur'an (42:11)]***

### c. Tawheed al-Ibaadah (maintaining the unity of worship):

(i) Definition and meaning of 'Ibadaah':

'Tawheed al-Ibaadah' means maintaining the unity of worship or 'Ibaadah'. Ibaadah is derived from Arabic word 'Abd' meaning slave or servant. Thus Ibaadah means servitude and worship. Salaah is one of the highest forms of Ibaadah i.e. worship but is not the only form. People misunderstand that worship of Almighty God only means ritual prayers but the concept of worship in Islam includes total obedience, submission and servitude. Following the commandments of God and abstaining from things He has forbidden is Ibaadah (worship) and this worship is only due to Allah alone and to no one else.

(ii) All three categories to be followed simultaneously.

Only believing in the first two categories of Tawheed without implementing Tawheed-al-Ibaadah is useless. The Qur'an gives the examples of "Mushrikeens" (idolaters) of the Prophet's time who confirmed the first two aspects of Tawheed. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

**Say: "Who is it that Sustains you (in life) From the sky and from the earth? Or who is it that Has power over hearing And sight? And who Is it that brings out The living from the dead And the dead from the living? And who is it that Rules and regulates all affairs? They will soon say, "Allah". Say, "Will you not then Show piety (to Him)?"**

***[Holy Qur'an 10:31]***

A similar example is repeated in Surah Zukhruf of the Holy Qur'an:

**"If thou ask them, Who Created them, they will Certainly say, Allah: how Then are they deluded Away (from the Truth)?"**

***[Holy Qur'an 43:87]***

The pagan Meccans knew that Allah was their Creator, Sustainer, Lord and Master. Yet they were not Muslims because they also worshipped other gods besides Allah. Allah categorized them as "Kuffaars" (disbelievers) and "Mushrikeen" (idol worshippers and those who associate partners with God).

**"And most of them Believe not in Allah Without associating (others As partners) with Him!"**

***[Holy Qur'an 12:106]***

Thus Tawheed al-Ibaadah i.e. maintaining the unity of worship is the most important aspect of Tawheed. He alone deserves worship and He alone can grant benefit to man for his worship.

# SHIRK:

## a. Definition:

The omission of any of the above mentioned categories of tawheed or deficiency in the fulfillment of any criteria of Tawheed is referred to as 'shirk'.

Shirk literally means sharing or associating partners. In Islamic terms it means associating partners with Allah and is equivalent to idolatry.

## b. Shirk is the greatest sin which Allah will never forgive:

The Holy Qur'an describes the greatest sin in Surah Nisa:

**"Allah forgives not That partners should be set up With Him; but He forgives Anything else, to whom He pleases; to set up Partners with Allah**

**Is to devise a sin Most heinous indeed"**

*[ Al-Qur'an 4:48]*

The same message is repeated in Surah Nisa:

**"Allah forgives not (The sin of) joining other gods With Him; but He forgives Whom He pleases other sins Than this: one who joins**

**Other gods with Allah,Has strayed far, far away**

**(From the Right)."**

*[ Al-Qur'an 4:116]*

## c. Shirk leads to hell fire:

The Qur'an says in Surah Maidah:

**"They do blaspheme who say: 'Allah is Christ the son Of Mary.' But said Christ: 'O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord And your Lord'. Whoever Joins other gods with Allah – Allah will forbid him The Garden, and the Fire Will be his abode. There will For the wrongdoers Be no one to help."**

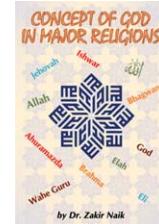
*[ Al-Qur'an5:72]*

## d. Worship and obedience to none but Allah:

The Qur'an mentions in Surah Al-Imran:

**Say: "O people Of the Book! Come To common terms As between us and you: That we worship None but Allah; That we associate No partners with Him; That we erect not, From among ourselves, Lords and patrons Other than Allah."**

**If then they turn back, Say ye: "Bear witness That we (at least) Are Muslims (bowing To Allah's Will)."**

*[ Al-Qur'an 3:64]*

## CONCLUSION:

The Holy Qur’an says:

**“Revile not ye Those whom they call upon Besides Allah, lest They out of spite Revile Allah In their ignorance.”**

***[ Al-Qur'an 6:108]***

**“And if all the trees On earth were pens And the Ocean (were ink), With seven Oceans behind it To add to its (supply), Yet would not the Words Of Allah be exhausted (In the writing): for Allah Is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom.”**

***[ Al-Qur'an 31:27]***

**“O men! Here is A parable set forth! Listen to it! Those On whom, besides Allah, You call, cannot create (Even) a fly, if they all Met together for the purpose! And if the fly should snatch Away anything from them, They would have no power To release it from the fly. Feeble are those who petition!"**

***( Al-Qur'an 22:73)***

And all Praise be to Allah, the Lord, Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer of all the Worlds!